PER
BR
1
.D55
v.1-2

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
FEB 9 2001
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Pamph.
G-47
D5924
v.1:1
copy 1

DIMENSION

MARCH 1964

DIMENSION

Volume I MARCH, 1964 Number

A student theological journal, conceived in order to give creative expression to contemporary theological issues of especial concern in the seminary community both at Princeton and at large. Giving voice to current issues is not the sole aim of this journal, for, in addition, it strives to stimulate mature discussion of new problems and new ideas.

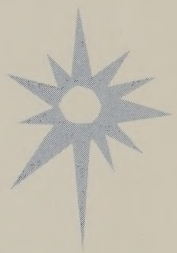
As a student journal, DIMENSION is based on the conviction that in order for theological education to achieve the utmost in excellence it should, and, indeed, it must provide and encourage the opportunity for original thought.

JOHN C. STATEN
Editor

•

Editorial Staff

RICHARD A. SUNDEEN, JR.
KATRINA J. STATEN
BRUCE G. INGLES
WALLACE T. FUKUNAGA



CONTENTS

Editorial: "A Crisis in the Church" 3

"The God-Man Relationship in the Modern World According to Bonhoeffer's Letters"
M. Richard Shaull 4

"James Baldwin: Prophet from Without"
Wallace T. Fukunaga 5

"A Question of Methodology" *David Fischer* 6

"The Word in the City" *Bruce G. Ingles* 7

"A Critical Look at Bonhoeffer's Plea for a 'Religionless Christianity'"
Roger Hull, Jr. 8

"Muslim-Christian Relations in Face of a Common Predicament"
Bruce Boston 9

"A CRISIS IN THE CHURCH"

An Editorial—

In defining our era as "pre-Christian," President James I. McCord has stated:

If the Church has lost her ability to capture the imagination and inspire the culture around her, she has also lost her own self-confidence and has begun to wonder openly about her role. She has become introverted, turned in on herself, and has broken off contact with the world that she no longer knows. She was unable to capitalize on the revival of interest in religion after the war, is depressed about her failure in mission, and contents herself with endless surveys and meetings in an effort to knock something together to get her off center . . . Against the background of the age is emerging a new man . . . ("*The New Man in the New Age*," Theology Today, *October*. 1961, 269-70.)

There are others who speak of the "post-Christian Era," and who point to our western civilization as having "come of age," that is, having approached an age in which the traditional world-view of Christianity is superseded by a "thoroughgoing scientific view of reality" to the result that "God is no longer necessary."

Whether or not we choose to define this "new age" or the "new man" as being "pre" or "post" Christian, the unavoidable fact remains that, for those who would dare to look long and hard enough at the revolutionary forces shaping this generation, there is, indeed, a crisis in the Church. It is to this crisis that the first issue of DIMENSION is directed. It has not been our purpose to outline a final answer to the problem and thus no single chorus is to be heard in this issue. We listen instead to several voices speaking out of different contexts to various aspects of the problem. It is our hope that by such a contrapuntal approach, a certain "dimensional" view of the present crisis of the Church may be laid bare for further discussion.

In an essay entitled "The God-Man Relationship in the Modern World According to Bonhoeffer's Letters" **Professor M. Richard Shaull** sheds a clear light on a subject so often beclouded by suspicion and misinterpretation. In presenting the lead essay to this issue, our lone faculty contributor finds his point of departure from three short sentences taken from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's April 30, 1944 letter from prison. Attempting to follow Bonhoeffer's lead to its logical conclusion, Professor Shaull articulates a thesis which has particular relevance for us here at Princeton Theological Seminary. Radically calling into question the traditional "metaphysical" and the "inward" roads to God, Dr. Shaull calls us to "step fully into the very midst of authentic human relationships and the contemporary struggle on behalf of man, and there share the sufferings of Christ . . ."

Of the challenges before the Church in this day of crisis none calls for greater "involvement in the world" than the Negro revolution. In "James Baldwin: Prophet from Without" **Wallace F. Kukunaga,** a Senior B.D. student via Hawaii and Cambridge, interprets the signs of the time through the prophetic challenge of Bald-

win's piercing invectives. According to Fukunaga, "The test which Baldwin raises for the churches of America is really no different from that which theologians such as Bonhoeffer have voiced with new urgency and freshness to Christians everywhere." In essence, "It calls for nothing less than a full involvement in the realities of today, regardless as to how painful the truth is and how sacred our illusions are: "If God cannot bring us to such an involvement, then," understood in Baldwin's terms, "it is time we got rid of him."

David Fischer and **Bruce G. Ingles** offer the reader a change of pace in two brief sketches "A Question of Methodology," and "The Word in the City." Fischer, whose article comes to us by way of a letter from Bogotá, Columbia where he is presently engaged in an internship, challenges what he calls "the secularist approach to spiritual renewal." He speaks on behalf of those who see the crisis of the church in terms of a "spiritual awakening." For Fischer, "Jesus Christ seems to be living now as he did in the first century exercising his power through the Holy Spirit in precisely the same way." With Ingles' "The Word in the City" we move from the ethereal realms to matters concrete. In an attempt to communicate the faith to what he calls "the modern young cliff-dweller," Ingles explores the possibilities of "re-mythologizing" traditional parabolic forms in terms of "the language of the street." Bruce Ingles is a Middler from Radnor, Pennsylvania.

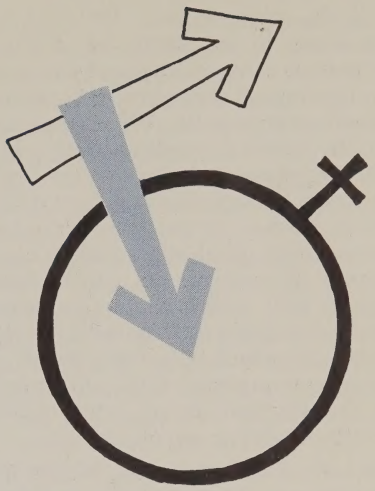
Roger Hull, Jr. raises a voice in objection to Bonhoeffer's rejection of metaphysics. In his analysis, entitled "A Critical Look at Bonhoeffer's Plea for a 'Religionless Christianity'," Hull agrees with Bonhoeffer's polemic against the *deus ex machina* interpretation of religion but stops short at accepting the martyr's chide of the metaphysical understanding of reality as "a spurious conception of transcendence." Hull argues for an alternative to Bonhoeffer's analysis which he feels, in its logical outcome, succeeds only in reducing God to "a mere ethical norm of human behavior." A Senior, Roger Hull, Jr. hails from Darien, Connecticut.

"Muslim-Christian Relations in Face of a Common Predicament," by **Bruce Boston** is a constructive analysis of possible avenues of approach for Christian mission to the Islamic world. Boston, a Middler from Beirut, Lebanon, sees a "common predicament" in the fact that for the Christian, as well as the Muslim, God "is no longer needed to solve the problems of existence; science, politics, technology and the 'free spirit of man' are quite capable of solving them alone." For Boston, the rise of secularism may well set the stage for a "new age" in Christian-Muslim relations. As an interesting contrast to Fischer's view of the Church and its mission, Boston's analysis has particular relevance for those who understand God's action with men as taking place in the center of historical existence through concrete human relationships.

JOHN C. STATEN

The God-Man Relationship in the Modern World According to Bonhoeffer's Letters

M. RICHARD SHAULL



During his last months in prison, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the theologian who had presented the traditional understanding of the divine-human relationship in such a profound and moving way in *Life Together* and *The Cost of Discipleship,* seems to have concluded that a radical re-interpretation of this relationship was called for. The fact that the fragments of his thought preserved in his last letters have aroused such great interest among so many of the younger generation is a sign that he has touched upon a problem which deserves our attention. It is rather disturbing, however, to see how easily we dismiss his challenge by rushing to the conclusion that he would lead us to give up transcendence, pay little attention to the God-Man relationship, and end us as humanists. Even distinguished theologians commit this error. In a book written for wide circulation among university and seminary students in this country, *For the Life of the World,* Professor Alexander Schemann calls this, "the acceptance of secularism," by Christians, " as the *truth* about the world." According to this view, he says,

> 'Honesty demands that we recognize that we must live in the world as if there were no God' . . . The important thing for us is that mission is understood here primarily in terms of human solidarity. A Christian is a 'man-for-the-other.' The . . . Christian mission is not to preach Christ, but to be Christians in life. (p. 84)*

Much has been written about Bonhoeffer's man come of age, and there is no point in repeating it here. What he has to say, however, about our relationship to God in such a situation seems to me to have special relevance for us here in Princeton Theological Seminary, and may thus merit examination. He states his thought on this most succinctly in his letter of April 30, 1944, from which I quote three short sentences:

> How do we speak of God without religion, i.e. without the temporally-influenced presuppositions of metaphysics, inwardness, and so on?
>
> I should like to speak of God not on the borders of life but as its center.
>
> God is the 'beyond' in the midst of our life.

In these few phrases, Bonhoeffer rejects the two principal means we have relied upon to give reality to the God-man relationship and suggests a third. The first of

---

*The writer does not mention Bonhoeffer but is apparently quoting from his letter of July 16, 1944. In addition to not bothering to take seriously the point Bonhoeffer was making, he tears the sentence out of context and makes it say something quite different from what was intended. In this letter, Bonhoeffer is concerned about the fact that modern science no longer needs God as a working hypothesis. Then he adds, "The only way to be honest is to recognize that we have to live in the world *etsi deus non daretur.* And that is just what we do see — *before God!* (Italics mine). So our coming of age forces us to a true recognition of our situation *vis-à-vis* God."

these is the *metaphysical.* We can easily get involved in all kinds of discussions about the meaning of metaphysics and its role in theological thought--and completely miss Bonhoeffer's point. What he is saying is that the whole metaphysical way of understanding reality belongs to a certain period of world history, which is now drawing to a close. As man moved from a mythological to an ontological way of thinking, the separation of subject and object became central, as well as the distinction between the natural and the supernatural. In such a situation, in which the category of substance became supreme, God was conceived of as the Highest Being who could be reached through the use of reason.

This way of understanding reality is not the only one possible; it belongs to a specific period. Moreover, there is no reason why Christianity must be inescapably tied to it. Now a new way of thinking is developing, which must have profound effects on our description of the God-man relationship. A Dutch philosopher, who is a convinced Christian, describes its consequences thus:

> In a secularized world there is no longer an ontological way of thinking, a thinking about higher beings, about metaphysical beings. There is no longer a lofty but incomprehensible control of metaphysical entities. In the former period, physics was controlled by metaphysics, by a kind of philosophy. Daily political life was controlled by eternal ethical and moral values. Man in his daily life was under the control of the timeless highest Being, of God. Now we are liberated from all these unreal supernatural entities; they are being eliminated. We ourselves are still in the process of gaining a new freedom. Only that which is directly related to us is real. Things do not exist in themselves; they are no longer substances, but they exist in and for the sake of what they do with us and what we do with them. We are caught up in the power of reality. There is no supernatural reality, high and lofty, above us. There is only that reality which confronts us directly, concretely. (Van Peursen, C. A., "Man and Reality — The History of Human Thought," *Student World,* 1963, No. 1, p. 16).

Having concluded that this change was taking place, Bonhoeffer became increasingly impatient with those theologians who were content to reaffirm the great realities of Christian faith in categories so closely identified with metaphysical thought. More than this, he was convinced that the Christian attempt to meet the deep crisis in Western philosophy had moved in a wrong direction. As one attempt after another to approach and have true knowledge of Ultimate Reality broke down, Kierkegaard and other theologians responded to the challenge by a transcendentalism which conceived of God as the Wholly Other, approachable from the human side only by a "leap of faith." Important as this effort to preserve God's majesty has been, it is too much set within the whole metaphysical framework, and ends up by contributing, in a rather strange way, to modern man's attempt to edge God out of the world and of life. During the critical years of Nazism and World War II, this provided a foundation for a strong and relevant witness. Now, it may be one of the major factors in the repudiation of Christianity by a new generation that is sensitive to some of the issues raised by Jesus Christ in the modern world but is unwilling to return to this whole way of thinking about reality as the essential precondition for faith. The amazing thing is that Bonhoeffer's whole theological effort reflected a struggle with this problem. As Bethge remarks, even in his earliest writings, he opposed any "philosophical idea of transcendence or metaphysics called God." (*The Challenge of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Life and Theology,* p. 8). In order to save the majesty of God, he moved in the opposite direction, by drawing Him into the World. For him, the Incarnation turns us away from metaphysical speculation about

God to *concreteness,* and has us think of revelation in social relations.

The second road which Bonhoeffer rejected was that of *inwardness,* which focuses the God-man relationship at the point of religious experience as understood in our pietistic, revivalistic tradition. In his outline for a book which was never written, in which he hoped to explore new ways for a "genuine experience of God" and "encounter with Jesus Christ," he has one short phrase which reads, "Pietism as the last attempt to maintain evangelical Christianity as a religion."

Bonhoeffer is convinced that to the degree that the relationship to God is kept within this context, we will be contributing to the spread of unbelief in the modern world. Man come of age is not greatly interested in inwardness nor is he likely to be brought to Christ by our attempts to convince him of his weakness and sin. In some parts of the world we may still win converts in this way, but they will be primarily of one type, the type not likely to make the reality of Christ visible in their life and witness in the modern world. Those most sincerely concerned about the human situation and most willing to respond to the challenge which Christ presents in it, will be alienated for the wrong reasons. The realm of inwardness is becoming one more area in which the "hypothesis of God" is no longer needed. To the corroding impact of psychoanalysis has now been added recent experiments with hallucogenic drugs, by which it is now possible to produce almost any type of mystical experience — formerly considered the sure proof of God's presence in our lives — by chewing the right number of morning glory seeds. Moreover, as this experience is restricted to a "religious" or "spiritual" sphere, quite unrelated to the major issues of human life and destiny in the world, it becomes something esoteric which sooner or later breaks down and leaves those who put so much trust in it empty and lost. In this situation, it is only natural that greater emphasis should be put on more intense and exaggerated experiences of a Pentecostal character. For those who are caught in the pietistic predicament, this may offer a sense of security and liberation for a time, but in the end it will only lead many to a greater despair. This does not mean that Bonhoeffer was any less concerned in his later years with man's relationship to Jesus Christ and his response to Him than at the time when he wrote *Life Together.* It was rather his passionate concern for this relationship which led him to repudiate such pietistic inwardness.

Having declared that metaphysics and inwardness are no longer valid paths to a meaningful relationship with God, Bonhoeffer turns us in a quite different direction. God will become a powerful reality in our lives today only if we open our eyes to Him and are prepared to meet Him in the center of our life in the world. "God is the 'beyond' in the midst of our lives." At all the crucial points of our personal relationships, in the complexity of our situation within history, in our constant meeting with the "otherness" which daily stands over against us, God confronts us.

We will do a great injustice to Bonhoeffer and only confuse our own search if we see here a return to the old liberalism with its simple continuity from the penultimate to the ultimate, and thus a new natural theology. For Bonhoeffer, what is central is *revelation,* but revelation understood as "nothing beyond, but an entity in, this historically and sociologically shaped world." The center of this is the Incarnation, in which the fullness of God is present in the world, in utter concreteness, in the "limited, weak, and humiliated man Jesus" (Bethge, p. 8.) And this same concreteness of revelation confronts us today in the church, where "Christ existing as the community of men" takes form in social relationships.

Moreover, in this revelation we discern that the reality of Christ and the reality of the world are intimately related to each other. Through Him the world was created, in Him all things are held together (Col. 1:15-17,) in Him the reality of Christ entered into the reality of the world which "it has already encompassed, seized and possessed." Therefore, "in Christ we are of-

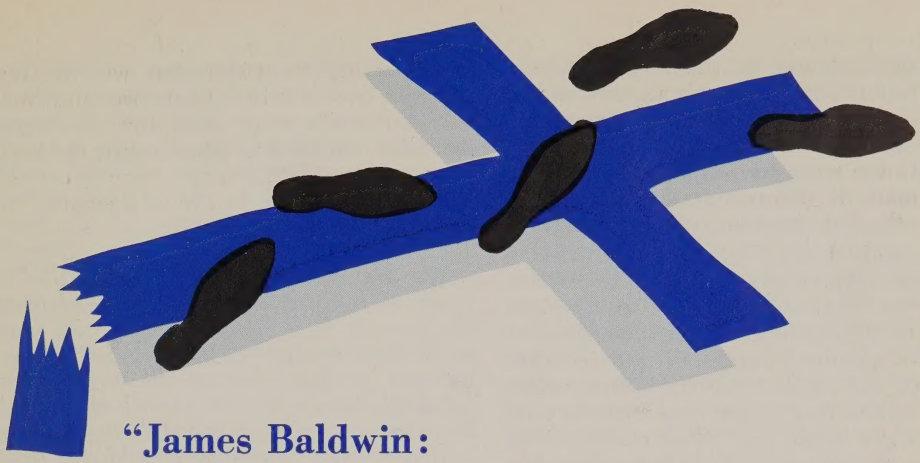
fered the possibility of partaking in the reality of God and in the reality of the world, but not in one without the other. The reality of God discloses itself only by setting me entirely in the reality of the world, and when I encounter the reality of the world it is always sustained, accepted, and reconciled in the reality of God." (*Ethics,* p. 61.)

In this context, the road toward a new experience of God becomes clear. While living in full encounter with the concreteness of revelation in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and in the church ("Christ existing as community,") we are called to live fully in the world. "I discovered and am still discovering . . . that it is only by living completely in this world that one learns to believe" (July 21, 1944). In our constant meeting of the Thou in others, the Divine Thou confronts up. "All creatures are now nothing else than vein masks, under which God conceals himself, and by which he deals with us" (Luther). It is in the midst of these relationships that the realities of forgiveness, grace and reconciliation take form and we meet and respond to the Christ who is *extra nos, pro nobis.* It is in the midst of the complexities and ambiguities of our involvements in the crucial human struggles of our times, within the orders of society, that the God who is at work reconciling all things to Himself confronts us concretely, and by faith we discern in these events, the presence and power of the God of Jesus Christ. And it is supremely in our participation "in the sufferings of God at the hands of a godless world" (July 18, 1944) that we discover the meaning of faith. There we find ourselves granted the grace to live in a relationship with God which is contrary to all of our "religious" desires of expectations, but which opens up before us a whole new world of life and meaning.

To receive this gift we must give up our search for a new metaphysical road to God, and our desperate strivings for esoteric religious experiences which will give us some new — and false — security. The one thing demanded of us is to step fully into the very midst of authentic human relationships and the contemporary struggle on behalf of man, and there share the sufferings of Christ, in confidence and trust.

We may have no ecstatic experiences; find no easy ways to win large numbers of converts or build successful churches. But it may be given to us to live by the hope which Bonhoeffer expressed, and perhaps even to share, some day, in the first fruits of its realization:

> It is not for us to prophesy the day, but the day will come when men will be called again to utter the word of God with such power as will change and renew the world. It will be a new language, which will horrify men, and yet overwhelm them by its power. It will be the language which proclaims the peace of God with men and the advent of his kingdom. (*Letters and Papers.* p. 160.)



"James Baldwin: Prophet from Without"

WALLACE T. FUKUNAGA

The summer of '63 has passed, and the nation, having witnessed the greatest outpouring of racial demonstrations, hate, and violence since the Civil War, now seeks to heal the many bloody wounds inflicted upon itself by its own people, both white and colored. The awesome and symbolic sound of the singing which echoed across the land, "We shall overcome!" has been subdued by the cold winter gusts, but the respite is only temporary. The winter must pass away, and as sure as the return of summer is the return of the piercing singing, the mass demonstrations, and the ugly violence. As with all revolutions, the Negro revolt will not cease short if its completion.

There are two aspects of the Negro revolution which need to be noted. First is the impact of its outburst. A story is told of a Chicago taxi driver who, upon being held up by a Negro-driven car, was heard to shout, "I'd like to run over everyone of those jigs." When asked why, he replied, "Because they're getting too much too fast." While his reply was far from being correct, it nevertheless reflects the sentiment of many Americans. The sudden display of organization and militancy by the Negro community has caught those long accustomed to the racial inequality of their society and the passivity of their colored neighbors by surprise. The *status quo* has entrenched itself so deeply that every disruptive influence, regardless of how meager, is felt as "too much."

Secondly, the Negro revolt is uniquely American. This is not to say that ours is the only nation beset with the problem of racial unrest. Rather, it is to point out the particularity – in time and place – of the revolution that confronts us. Why, after patiently waiting for a hundred years, are the Negroes finally demanding payment of the promissory note called the Emancipation Proclamation? Why is it that the Negroes, for the first time, are willing to rid themselves of their non-violent tradition and take on new and drastic measures to secure their ends? Why, despite the fact that the message of the Black Muslims is not new, are the Negroes only now willing to give it a serious hearing?

Freedom and the Search for Identity

In his momentous essay, "Letters From a Region in My Mind," James Baldwin provides us with some answers whose abrasiveness and poignancy are enough to make one shudder. He informs us that while legislative and judicial acts, such as the Supreme Court decision of '54, all contributed to the rise of the Negro revolution, what is even more significant is the new freedom felt by

the Negroes themselves. No longer is there a respect for the white man and his standards. The Negro knows the white man too well, better than the white man knows himself, and what the Negro knows of the white man, he despises. In the eyes of the Negro, the apparent lack of self-awareness on the part of the white man is expressive of his inability to live with himself. Whereas in the past, the Negro was able to accept the self-assertiveness and self-confidence of the white man at face-value, now he sees these qualities as betraying a creature who is guilt-ridden, sex-ridden, and who has managed to delude himself by transferring his own failure onto the Negro. How can the Negro respect the white man when he knows that the cowardice and dishonesty of the latter are the basic justification for his crime against the black man? According to Baldwin, it is most important that we do not confuse the issue. In his revolt, the Negro is not seeking acceptance or love from the white man. "I do not know many Negroes who are eager to be *accepted* by white people," writes Baldwin, "still less to be loved by them; they, the blacks, simply don't wish to be beaten over the head by the whites every instant of our brief passage on this planet."

Coupled with the Negro's loss of respect for the white man is his search for his own identity. Up until the present, it was the white man who provided the Negro with an image of himself. This image, Baldwin tells us, is no longer acceptable as it mirrors too much the inhumanity in which the white man has safely imprisoned the Negro. "Uncle Tom is, for example, if he is called Uncle, a kind of saint. He is there, he endures, he will forgive us, and this is the key to that image. But if he is not Uncle, he is merely Tom, he is a danger to everybody. He will bring havoc on the countryside. When he is Unicle Tom, he has no sex — when he is Tom, he does — and this obviously says much more about the people who invented this myth than it does about the people who are object to it." When a Negro carries a picket, locks his arm in a human wall, and risks bodily injury upon himself, it is his determination to shatter this myth while, at the same time, to find out who he is. He is demonstrating to himself and to the white man that the Negro need not and, indeed, shall not be the saint as was Uncle Tom.

Nothing to Lose

We are informed by Baldwin that in order to comprehend the full measure of the present race crisis, we must not view th Negro's search for identity apart from his loss of the sense of personal worth. Walk the streets of such ghettos as Harlem and Chicago's South Side; visit the prisons, narcotics wards, and mental hospitals, Baldwin dares his readers, and you will find many, many Negroes "from whom everything has been taken away, including, most crucially, their sense of their own worth." He then goes on to remind us that: "People cannot live without this sense; they will do anything whatever to regain it. This is why the most dangerous creation of any society is that man who has nothing to lose. The message they preach represents for them not some far-fetched idea but a reality, and it is precisely because of this fact that the many Negroes who have lost or come close to losing their sense of personal worth are now ready to listen to the Muslims' message.

The above analysis, as with much of Baldwin's essay, is clearly an exaggeration and meant by him as a threat to the white man. But Baldwin apparently knows that in the matter of the race crisis, the extreme point of view is necessary as it brings into the open certain aspects of the Negro's view of himself, the white man, and the American society which we need to face but which we often overlook or avoid. Searching deeply into his own mind and experiences, Baldwin performs an extremely useful service by being as frank and personal as he is. Is it too late for a reconciliation between the races? That is the question that underlies much of his thinking and which he urges us to seriously consider. But in so doing, attention must be shifted from the white man to the Negro: Will the Negro accept the white man? Baldwin ap-

pears unsure of his own response as is seen in the question he asks of himself after recounting the hairbreadth quality of his decision against joining forces with the Black Muslims and reflecting on the alternative position left to him: "Do I *really* want to be integrated into a burning house?"

Plea for a New Society

Despite his bitter denunciation of white society, Baldwin demonstrates by his own hopes that he really cares to continue belonging to America. But his care goes beyond the hope of finding a place for himself in present-day American society. Indeed, there is throughout his essay, an eloquent and moving plea for a *radically new society*. He writes: "It is the responsibility of free men to trust and to celebrate what is constant — birth, struggle, and death are constant, and so is love—and to apprehend the nature of change, to be able and willing to change. I speak of change not on the surface but in the depths — change in the sense of renewal. But renewal becomes impossible if one supposes things to be constant that are not — safety, for example, or money, or power. One clings to them by chimeras, by which one can only be betrayed, and the entire possibility — to freedom disappears."

Not law, but morality is the basis of Baldwin's new society. This is because Baldwin believes that at its deepest levels, the answer to America's racial ills, as with the rest of her evils, lies not so much in the liberation of her people before the law as in the liberation of their minds. Americans must be set free from the delusions and false fears they have of themselves, others, reality, and the future. They must not be afraid of death and tragedy and the other constancies of life. They must learn to accept and love themselves and each other, so that a great variety of rich human relationships can be appreciated and embraced, even in the midst of life's tragedies. These are the hopes Baldwin sets for this nation. Without the possibility of their being realized, life in America loses meaning. "I am far from convinced," he writes, "that being released from the African witchdoctor was worthwhile if I am now — in order to support the moral contradictions and the spiritual aridity of my life — expected to become dependent on the American psychiatrist. It is a bargain I refuse."

As with Baldwin, the Black Muslims also call for a new society. But the fallacy of their vision is that it views this new society as a separate nation. It is unable to see, as Baldwin well sees, that the Negro and the white man deeply need each other if either is to achieve his identity and maturity. To divide and separate is to deny a future impregnated with the full possibility to learn and be enriched by the tragedies of past and present. It is to become something less than "a people."

Truth's "State of Grace"

In his insistence that the white community and the Negro community learn to live with each other, Baldwin is not looking for an utopia of congenial and same-minded people. Deep-rooted differences between the two groups will continue and be the cause of conflict. However, these need to be honestly brought into the open and to be appreciated in their difference and spoken of truthfully as seen from each perspective. The burden of this enormous task falls most heavily upon the white man who, in the eyes of Baldwin, is most desperately in need of truth's "state of grace." Listen to his piercing appraisal:

. . . a vast amount of the energy that goes into what we call the Negro problem is produced by the white man's profound desire not to be judged by those who are not white, not to be seen as he is, and at the same time a vast amount of the white anguish is rooted in the white man's equally profound need to be seen as he is, to be released from the tyranny of his mirror. All of us know, whether or not we are able to admit it, that mirrors can only lie, that death by drowning awaits one there. It is for this reason that love is so desperately sought and so cunningly avoided. Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot

live without and know we cannot live within. I use the word "love" here not merely in the personal sense but as a state of being, or a state of grace — not in the infantile sense of being made happy but in the tough and universal sense of quest and daring and growth.

Confession and Prophecy

It is at this point that Baldwin's essay is more than a blistering and shocking analysis of the race crisis. It is a confession of the most profound kind and as such, it has the power to heal all who hear it. The fact that it is being heard and seriously taken by many Americans is enough to make one believe that the issues of race are not hopeless, that reconciliation of the races is possible and that love, of the kind spoken of by Baldwin, is presently real. Baldwin himself knows this and that is why despite all his pessimism and gloom, he is able to write: "But at the bottom of my heart . . . I know that we are capable of bearing a great burden . . . the point here is that we are living in an age of revolution, whether we will or no, and that America is the only Western nation with both the power and, as I hope to suggest, the experience that may help to make these revolutions real and minimize the human damage."

But no revolution is without its pessimism as each has its dangers as well as opportunities. Perhaps the greatest danger within the Negro revolt is the "exaggerations" of Baldwin becoming "normative." For a large segment of Americans to live as if they had nothing to lose comes dangerously close to a mass paranoia whose ultimate end can only lead to domestic suicide. In short, the present racial crisis has the potential for bringing this nation closer to its fulfillment or its doom: it can lead to universal progress or retrogression. Baldwin says all this eloquently in the closing lines of his essay:

> . . . If we — and now I mean the relatively conscious whites and the relatively conscious blacks, who must, like lovers, insist on, or create, the consciousness of others — do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare, and achieve our country, and change the history of the world. If we do not dare everything, the fulfillment of that prophecy, recreated from the Bible in song by a slave, is upon us: *God gave Noah the rainbow, No more water, the fire next time!*

The Test of the Church

That the Church in America, except for a few of its courageous voices, has failed in its witness to the race issue is obvious enough, and no one is more convinced of this failure than James Baldwin — the son of a Baptist preacher, once himself a "young minister" of a Pentecostal storefront church in Harlem, and now a relentless critic of Christianity. "In the reality of power, Christianity has operated with an unmitigated arrogance and cruelty . . . It is not too much to say that whoever wishes to become a truly moral human being must first divorce himself from all the prohibitions, crimes and hypocrisies of the Christian Church." Out of his bitter experience with Christianity, the Church became for Baldwin no less a "gimmick" of the white man as dope — both were marketed to "blackmail" the Negro into accepting the immoralities of the white man's values and mores.

Although Baldwin's thinking is again exaggerated and his criticism of the Church overblown, the contribution he makes to Christians of this nation is unmistakably clear. It is not simply because his writing contains a great deal of Christian doctrines and symbolism. More important is the manner in which he relies on the Christian heritage in order to understand the realities of today and the human response demanded by these realities. His affirmations of what we are called to do in mutual love and judgement if we are to become "a people" speaks as a sermon that comes straight from the Word.

Baldwin is not a non-believer. His exper-

ience with Christ was too real and personal. Of it he writes:

> It was, for a long time . . . my meat and drink. I rushed home from school, to the altar, to be alone there, to commune with Jesus, my dearest friend, who would never fail me, who knew all the secrets of my heart. Perhaps he did, but I didn't, and the bargain we struck, actually, down there at the foot of the cross, was that he would never let me find out. He failed his bargain. He was a much better man than I took him for.

When Baldwin today rids himself of God, it is only because that God protects people from truth and love by illusion. Unlike the Christ he met at the foot of the cross, this God keeps the religious bargain people make with him out of their fear and loneliness. Baldwin is simply calling us to dispose of such a God and return to the One who, like Jesus, is "bigger" than such a bargain. "If the concept of God has any validity or any use, it can only make us larger, freer, and more loving. If God cannot do this, then it is time we got rid of him."

The test which Baldwin raises for the churches of America is really no different from that which theologians such as Bonhoeffer have voiced with new urgency and freshness to Christians everywhere. It calls for nothing less than a full involvement in the realities of today, regardless as to how painful the truth is and how sacred our illusions are. If God cannot bring us to such an involvement, then it is time we got rid of him. We live in an age of revolution and as with all revolutions, the Negro revolt calls for radical changes in personal outlook and institutional structures. This is to say that the events of this revolution, because it is taking place in this nation, and the incisive words of James Baldwin, because he speaks directly to it from the framework of Christian doctrine and symbolism, provide an unusual opportunity for Christians of this nation to learn of the age in which we live and of the witness of the Church to this age.

Stated in another way, the test facing the Church in America is this: if the chance for the Church to play a decisive role in the solving of the race crisis is gone, the opportunity is still present for the issues of this crisis to help solve the problems of the Church. Its impact must be more than that of disclosing to the American Church its isolation from the most critical moral problem that faces this nation and from the forces which are acting boldly to meet it. Such a realization, along with a most contrite confession, are necessary — but only as a point of departure. The Negro revolt is yet unfinished and there may yet be time for the Church to be *renewed* by the impact of its moral and spiritual verve.

By taking seriously the "new society" to icans, the Church might be re-awakened of which Baldwin has called his fellow Amerits own prophetic role of the kind that is grounded in historical reflection and empowered to create the future. By viewing its witness in this new society in terms of the daring and radical demands for biblical witness (not humanistic or pietistic efforts to manipulate God and society), the Church may well be aided in the task of recovering its true mission and integrity. As Baldwin so aptly puts it in the closing lines of his essay, the time has come when, "to end the racial nightmare, and achieve our country, and change the history of the world" — we must will "to dare everything." For the Church in America, this means first of all, to dare the removal of the yoke of segregation that has weighed heavily upon its own body. But more important is the dare of obedience to the Word, as recalled to us in the cry of Amos: "Thus saith the Lord, 'Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an everflowing stream.' " Otherwise, "the fire next time!"

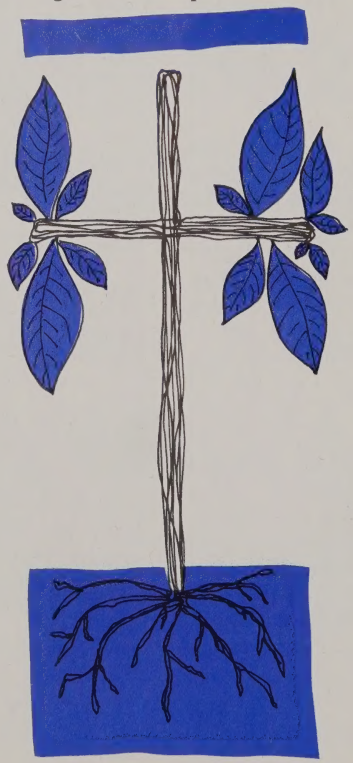
A Question of Methodology

DAVID FISHER

Last week I visited two very dissimilar groups here in Colombia; a pentecostal church and an interdenominational student conference. Founded ten years ago, the pentecostal church now has eight hundred members, twelve hundred "simpatizantes", fifty lay pastors who have completed a year of training, and sixteen weekly home study groups. Last year one hundred and twenty new members were baptized into the fellowship of the church, many of whom were previously prostitutes, alcoholics, victims of witchcraft, or other outcasts of society; and over three hundred were baptized with the Holy Spirit by the Lord Jesus Christ. While I was there, a boy with leukemia was verifiably healed, as well as a cancer patient, an arthritic, and a man suffering from a hernia . . . Upon arriving at the conference, I found the university students talking about how they could make the Gospel relevant to the modern world.

I couldn't help comparing the two groups and doing some thinking. Though agreeing with the students that the sixteenth century form of the church (Classical Protestantism) and the thirteenth century form (Roman Catholicism) are both becoming increasingly irrelevant to modern life, yet I was bothered by their proposed solution to this problem: total involvement with the world.

"We need to incarnate ourselves in the world just as Jesus was incarnated." Do we really know what we are saying? Are we able to drink his cup and be baptized with his baptism? God was not an average man. The important fact in the incarnation is not What Jesus was (a man) but Who he was (what sort of man). God sent His Son to demonstrate that human life for which all things had been originally created, a life most involved, not with the world, but with His Spirit. The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptism and remained upon him. He healed all types of diseases, expelled demons from the oppressed, taught with an authority based upon the true wisdom of the Spirit, and refused to use the methods of the world either to save it or himself. It would seem a perilous reductionism to suppose that our cultural resources are anything comparable to the powerful life of the Son of man.



The secularist approach to spiritual renewal is in danger of seeing in Jesus Christ, not the image of God, but of itself. It conforms the New Testament to its own experience by seeing everything different from twentieth century culture as time-bound to the first century. Desiring to be part of the modern world, it relegates, where convenient, the experience of the primitive church to the irrecoverable past. Yet the New Testament church was not an organic part of the "world in which it lived", nor did it claim to be a part of its culture. The early Christians corporately experienced the outpoured Spirit and had fellowship with the Resurrected Lord in a way which set them over against their world, just as the out-

poured Spirit in our day is calling many out from the world into Christ. Now, as then, the Word is being confirmed in the churches "by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit." Now, as then, these empirical events remain startling enigmas to a world whose eyes have not been opened to see the Reality of the kingdom of God which lies behind them. The question to be put to the secularist is this: Rejecting as irrelevant this present action of the Holy Spirit, would they also have rejected it, thus rejecting the Christian church itself, had they lived in the first century? "But you cannot live in the first century any longer — you are in the twentieth!" it is replied. Yet, Jesus Christ seems to be living now as he did then exercising his power through the Holy Spirit in precisely the same way.

As the first step toward spiritual renewal and service, rather than seeking to incarnate ourselves in the world, should we not seek to *become incarnated by* the Spirit of the living God, to be drawn into the Resurrection life of our Lord? The disciples waiting in Jerusalem to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, even Jesus himself being driven into the wilderness after being baptized by a strange prophet — these hardly seem proper examples of the secularist path toward spiritual renewal. And yet the Holy Spirit received by these early Christians from their Lord led them into a life of community and service which provides the secularists with the theological material (the New Testament) which they now use against the Holy Spirit's present activity. This turn of events simply shows that without the full presence of the Spirit behind the Word, the concepts of the New Testament can be put to the service of any cultural substitute for eternal life. Biblical truth is stretched over non-Biblical experience.

Is not this how the church got into its trouble in the first place? A desire to gain the world let it take upon itself the metaphysical systems of the Graeco-Roman world and the feudal power structure of medieval man, as well as his pagan festivals. The church "became relevant" to its culture, at the cost of its conscience and soul. The irony of the secularist movement in the church today is that the same method which originally caused the problem (a merger with general culture) is now being tried as an escape from the problem. The world is being loved again — this time the secular, anticlerical world. The secularist does not see the problem in this way. He locates the problem not in the fact that the church has merged with the world, but in the fact that the present church is living with the "church-world" mergers of the thirteenth, sixteenth, or nineteenth centuries. Now, it is hoped, a twentieth century church-world merger will make the gospel relevant in a transforming way. Yet, in every age, it seems that the broad adaptions of the church to the world have resulted in less than the transcendant life witnessed to by the New Testament. Can a methodology which has failed repeatedly in the past work now?"

Is not the best way to transform the world to forget about it and to lose it in order to save it? God himself is the only one who really loves the world. We ourselves are not capable of loving it without freeing ourselves from it. We are not to love the world, but to love God. Only as we receive God's Spirit are we made free enough from the world to serve it without worshipping it. Yet we are always afraid to turn from the world to God to receive His Spirit. We act like we really do not believe that God exists in Himself to be known, or that the Holy Spirit is a real presence apart from our own spirits and the spirit of deception at work in the world. We need to have the same trust in the Father that characterized the life of Jesus, believing that if we are truly filled with the Spirit of God, then we too will be led into more meaningful service to the world than had we struck out on our own to serve it, informed with ever so correct a theology. God is able to apply our lives to the world far better than we are. And He even seems to have a far greater interest than we in doing so.

Jesus was more interested in obeying the Father and being led by the Spirit than in

saving the world. It was the Father who loved the world so much that He sent His Son to save it. It was the father who reconciled the world to Himself in the Son. The Son said, "I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father." This is what being a son of God means. The Son obeyed the Father, loved Him, and did His works. Those who believe in the Son are given power to become sons of God themselves. The Son was led by the Spirit, and all those who are led by the Spirit are sons of God. The Son said that those who believed in Him would do the works which He had done, but that without Him nothing could be done. What were His works? Those that are recorded in the Gospels, those which the Father sent Him to do.

Being "in Christ" is far more than launching programs, confessing creeds, and maintaining traditional ligurgy. To be in Christ is to participate in His action and affection. Let those who criticize "personal experiences" with the Lord not reduce these to the empirical level of "emotion", creating a new "Beelzebub" who receives the credit due to the Spirit of God. Let them instead realize that the closer one penetrates to the heart of Reality the more he is met by the Person in whom all things hold together, the One through whom and toward whom all history moves. Finding our very life in this Person, He sends us into the world, as the Father sent Him. More than we know, the central motivation in the lives of great men in the church, and hence in the world, is like that of Paul himself:

> "And I said, 'Who are you Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and bear witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you . . . .'
>
> Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

The Word in the City

BRUCE G. INGLES

The story of man begins in a garden and ends in a city. Much of the imagery of this story has been laid to rest in the garden while man has migrated to the city. Along the way, words have been emptied of their meaning, symbols have become barren, and there is a mumbling about the absurdity of life. How is the Word of God communicated to the modern young cliff-dweller, born into violence, uncertain of every shadow, nourished on jungle-machine rhythms and the "sex-press?"

Faith-vehicles may and must be reformed. It is -folly to try to freeze a language (i.e., Latin, Elizabethan English) for it is never entirely replaced by the new form. Has "West Side Story" replaced "Romeo and Juliet"; "My Fair Lady", "Pygmalion"; or "J.B.", "Job?" Are both forms given new life? Any language that has become *volk* — of the people — may become a faith-vehicle if it does not translate away the monosyllables of the faith (i.e., sin, grace, faith, love), and philosophize away the historical setting in which God visited and redeemed man.

Jesus spoke in parables "because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand . . . their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn for me to heal them." (Mt. 13: 13-15) Is bluntness of expression necessary to pierce the veneer of the dull? Are the niceties and antiseptic phrases of the respectable a barrier to communication? Rather than "Jesus healed a blind man," would they hear, "Jesus mixed spittle and dust and pressed the clay to the blind beggar's eyes. And the man saw." Would a rewording of some parables, to introduce them, distort the truth they carry? For instance, could the Pharisee and the publican be called the "guy with heart" (proud of fearlessness) and the "guy who punks out" (heart-broken failure)? Are the good Samaritan and the father of the prodigal son beloved because *we know people like that and situations like that?* Isn't that the purpose of a parable — to identify the known with the unknown? What if there are two unknowns? The following are true neither to dialect or original, but are offered as illustrative attempts at awakening:

1• *The Parable of the Surprise Value (Mt. 13:44)*

The Kingdom of heaven is like a T-bird engine which has been hidden in a '50 Ford. A guy sees it and his eyes bug out and he slams the lid, and he humps it back to the room to sell all his stuff to buy himself that Ford.

2• *The Parable of the Banquet (Lk. 14:15-24)*

Things had been hot and still all day. Nothing at all was happening at the 173rd Street Project. It made you want to burst. Only Tony's Pizza Parlor was open, and we were just hanging around.

Suddenly this tall, white-haired man with square glasses appeared, walking his animal, and it didn't look like he was going to shove off right away. We all wondered, "Who'd this bird think he was, anyway, eyeing our turf like that?" And when he came over, the guys leaned casual, stiffening a bit.

Now, he didn't give us none of this hard look stuff and he sang a pretty decent song, only no one said very much because of the others that were there. He invited us to his place across the river, and it sounded worth a try. Before he left he said he'd send a bus in seven days.

A week later the bus arrived and the driver sat on the horn, but no one answered. He waddled over to Tony's and when he reached the door, all the guys scattered. He stood in the doorway, filling it, grabbed Brig and said,

"Aren't you fellows forgetting something?"

And Brig said, "Man, I just remembered, I gotta sweep the roof."

And Antic said, "Yeh, I'm gonna buy some more glue."

And Bud said, "Well, I'll be damned. I clean forgot. Anyway I gotta meet Nita."

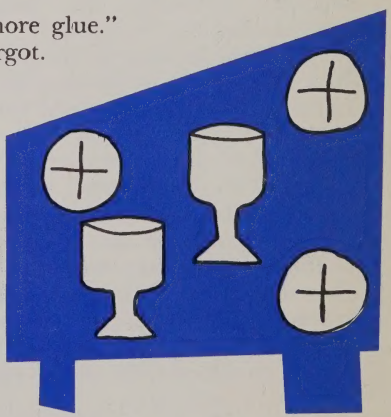
So the driver squeezed into a telephone booth and put a hot line through to the Old Man, who gave him the word and told him to pick up anyone he met standing along the boulevard on the way back. And that day across the river they began a real feed and a big time.

Back at the Project, Bud said, "Pizza?"

"Give me a light," said Antic.

And Brig said, "Rev it."

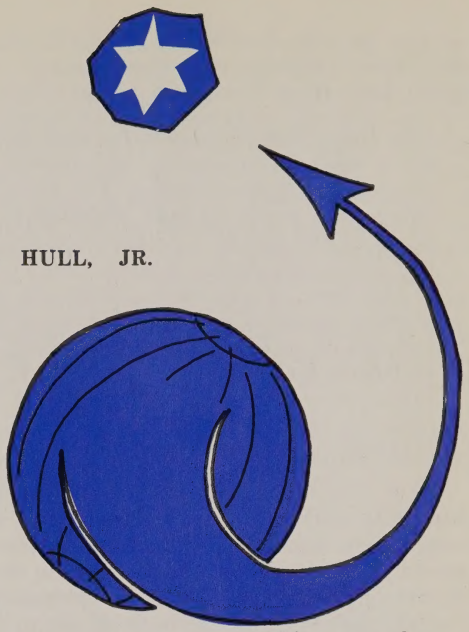
They roared down the hot city streets. And their voices were heard no more.



BRUCE G. INGLES

"A Critical Look at Bonhoefffer's Plea for a Religionless Christianity"

ROGER HULL, JR.



But when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeded from the Father, he will bear witness to me . . . He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you." *John* 15:26, 16:14

Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his now famous *Letters and Papers from Prison* has raised more acutely than any other modern theologian the question for the Christian Church of who Jesus Christ is for the twentieth century world. This is a question of crucial importance for the Church's own self understanding of its presence and mission in a society which has become essentially secular. It is a question which must be answered if the Church is to fulfill its task in the modern world.

I.

Bonhoeffer's main thesis in his prison writings is that the world we now live in is a "world come of age"; a world that in its knowledge of and relation to God has come to a position of manhood, has attained a certain independence from God, no longer needing Him in the traditional sense of a child needing a father.

The movement beginning about the 13th century towards the autonomy of man (under which head I place the discovery of the laws by which the world lives and manages in science, social and political affairs, art, ethics, and religion) has in our time reached a certain completion. Man has learned to cope with all questions of importance without recourse to God as a working hypothesis . . . it is becoming evident that everything goes along without 'God' and just as well as before. (*LETTERS AND PAPERS, March* 2, 1942)

More importantly, for Bonhoeffer this is a development which must not be resented by the Christian, but welcomed and affirmed for what it is worth. The world's coming of age should be recognized by the Christian as forcing us to a true awareness of our position before God — that we must live as men who can get along very well without him. As Bonhoeffer puts it, "The God who is with us is the God who forsakes us. The God who makes us live in this world without using him as a working hypothesis is the God before whom we are ever standing." (*Letters and Papers,* July 16, 1944)

In no case should the Church try to push the world back into some unnatural position of childhood and "tutelage." Such an attempt, which Bonhoeffer feels to be the effort of much of Christian apologetics, is not only pointless, but also ignoble and un-Christian.

It is on the basis of a frank and open "non-religious" interpretation of Biblical acceptance of such a world, a world come

of age, that Bonhoeffer makes his famous plea for a "religionless Christianity," a truth. He writes:

> *The thing that keeps coming back to me is, what is Christianity, and indeed what is Christ, for us today? The time when men could be told everything by means of words, whether theological or simply pious, is over, and so is the time of inwardness and conscience, which is to say the time of religion as such. We are proceeding towards a time of no religion at all: men as they are now simply cannot be religious anymore.* (*LETTERS AND PAPERS, April* 30, 1944)

This plea, of course, depends on Bonhoeffer's own particular understanding of religion. As Eberhard Bethge, Bonhoeffer's prison correspondent, has pointed out, "religion" for Bonhoeffer means primarily four things*: (1) It means individualism: an inward and individualistic concern for salvation unrelated to creation as a whole; (2) it means a metaphysical interpretation of God's transcendence which is considered necessary as a superstructure for meaning; (3) religion is a compartment of life concerned simply with "religious" acts rather than with the whole of life; (4) finally, religion means the *deus ex machina* concept — the use of God as a stop-gap for what man does not know, bringing Him in and trying to find a place for Him at the borders of human existence rather than at its center and strength. "Religion" is primarily the postulation of a transcendental reality in order for man to find help and protection in the time of adversity.

This is what Bonhoeffer essentially means by "religion" and why he believes such a "religious" interpretation of the Gospel is now closed for a world come of age, a world that has grown up in its knowledge and no longer needs "God" as a stopgap for its ignorance. Above all else, Bonhoeffer is wrestling with the perennial Christian problem of the communication of the Gospel to each new age and culture. As he puts it, "Let me briefly summarize what I am concerned about: it is, how can we reclaim for Christ a world which has come of age?" (**Letters and Papers,** June 27, 1944)

II.

What are we to think of Bonhoeffer's analysis? Let me first of all say that I believe the question, "How can we make Christ relevant to the world in which we live?" is a false one. I would like to suggest, that contrary to much popular opinion in our seminary community, "making Christ relevant" is *not* our primary concern or the primary concern of the Church. Jesus Christ, if He is the Christ, *is* relevant to the to make Him so. The Church's primary task is not to "make Christ relevant," but to be as obedient as possible to God's revelation of the Christ as recorded in Scripture, trusting that as we are so, the Holy Spirit will then reveal His relevance to the age in which we live, and apply His truth to the hearts of men. I do not believe that "making Christ relevant" is the form in which Bonhoeffer raises his question, but I do believe that it is often the form in which it is asked by many of his disciples. Yet even with Bonhoeffer there remains this ever-present danger and it is one that must be closely guarded against. For the most striking absence in all of Bonhoeffer's thought is any doctrine of the work of the Holy Spirit in the communication of the Gospel. This, it seems to me, is one of his most serious handicaps.

But what are we to think of his plea for a "non-religious" interpretation of Christianity? In his major thrust against the *deus ex machina* concept of religion and the Gospel, I find myself in major agreement. But here also there seems to be grounds for caution. While certainly there have been elements in the history of the Christian Church that have perverted the Gospel into a purely individualistic concern for inward salvation, it is equally a perversion of the Biblical witness to say

*Eberhard Bethge, "The Challenge of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Life and Theology," *The Chicago Theological Seminary Register,* vol. LI, (February 1961), pp. 33-34.

that in it there is no concern for individual salvation or that such salvation is unimportant. It is certainly true to say that Biblical religion, in contrast to many modern conceptions of religion, represents a total way of life and not simply a set of compartmentalized religious practices, but certain "religious" habits, such as Bible reading, special times of prayer, and common liturgical observances, are found and advocated in Biblical religion. If *Life Together* and Bonhoeffer's own practices in prison are any guide, I do not believe it is Bonhoeffer's purpose to depreciate the "religious" life in this sense of the word, but I am not sure that this is always the case with many of his followers.

My major concern, however, with Bonhoeffer's suggestion of a "non-religious" interpretation of Christianity, i.e. a non-*deus ex machina* interpretation of the Gospel, is his categorical rejection of what has traditionally been called "metaphysics." While Bonhoeffer is not always clear in what he means by the term, it seems that he does mean two things. First of all, he conceives of it as an overarching mental scheme by which we seek to explain life to ourselves, to answer life's "ultimate" questions, in order to give our lives meaning and security.* In this sense, Bonhoeffer considers metaphysics as nothing more than another aspect of the individualistic preoccupation with salvation in the *deus ex machina* concept of religion, and hence he rejects it.

But is this all there is to metaphysics, and even if it is, is this a necessary reason for rejecting it? It does not seem to me that it helps matters very much to say that man should not be concerned with answering life's ultimate questions, or that he is being an egoistic stargazer when he seeks an overarching meaning for his life. On the contrary, it seems that such an endeavor may simply be a fulfillment of God's command in Genesis 1:28 and an occupation that should be encouraged and not castigated by the Christian Church.

Furthermore, since metaphysics has been traditionally conceived as an intellectual discipline which seeks to identify and understand *as far as possible* "what is ultimate and eternal in relation to what is contingent and temporal,"* it does not seem to do much for the theological enterprise to say that the Christian in today's world should no longer be concerned with such questions. For the Christian, if he has intellectual integrity and Biblical orientation, *is* ultimately concerned with the existence or nonexistence of a personal God whom he claims to be both ultimate and eternal. For this reason he cannot categorically dispense with questions that have been traditionally the domain of "metaphysics."

Bonhoeffer, however, means something more by metaphysics than the actual quest for an overarching mental scheme; he also points to a particular philosophical conception. In this sense, metaphysics means a transcendental understanding of God's being which locates him outside of the natural world, resulting in a division of the world into two realms, one natural and one supernatural. This is Bonhoeffer's main contention against Barth and in order to avoid a division of the world into two realms, he attempts to reinterpret God's transcendence as existing entirely in this world. To do this, however, he ends up with a purely ethical interpretation.

> *Our relation to God is not a religious relationship to a Supreme Being, absolute in power and goodness, which is a spurious conception of transcendence, but a new life for others, through participation in the Being of God.* (LETTERS AND PAPER, p. 165)

For Bonhoeffer, the Christian's experience of God's transcendence is simply his experience of God in Jesus Christ as one whose only concern is a "life for others."

But is this purely ethical understanding of God's transcendence adequate to the Biblical witness? It seems to me most clearly that it is not. For the Biblical writers bear witness equally as much to God's ontolog-

*Here I am indebted to Clifford Green's analysis, "Bonhoeffer's Analysis of Religion," in *The Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, XIX, 1 (November 1963).

ical transcendence as they do to his ethical transcendence of man. Otherwise how can we make sense out of the self-emptying of Christ in Philippians 2? This and similar passages indicate that we must interpret God's transcendence in other than purely ethical terms as Bonhoeffer would have us do.

In conclusion, for these reasons I find myself unable to accept Bonhoeffer's critique to metaphysics, and in this aspect, his plea for a "non-religious" interpretation of Christianity. There may be many good reasons for questioning the validity of traditional metaphysics in today's world, namely in light of the penetrating analysis of the linguistic philosophers, but I do not believe these questions are part of Bonhoeffer's own thought. While ultimately I am in sympathy with Bonhoeffer's attempt to avoid the difficulties raised by a division of the world into two realms, a division which seems to be necessitated by any ontological interpretation of God's transcendence, I believe his own solution raises more serious difficulties than it solves. For in the end, it seems that the logical outcome of his analysis is to reduce God to a mere ethical norm of human behavior and to end up in the same 19th century liberal dilemma, the very last thing he would have wanted.

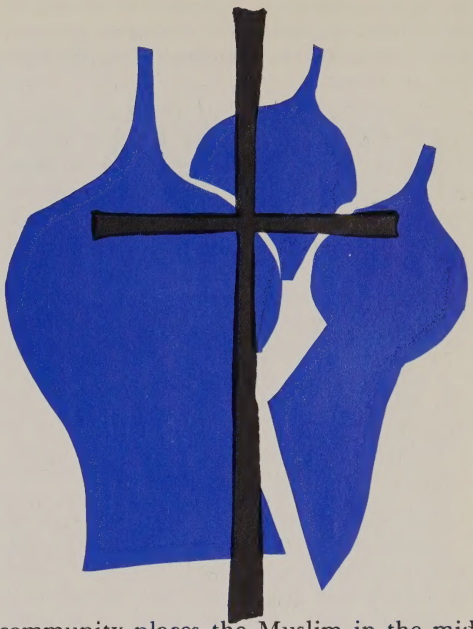
**Mack B. Stokes, "Theology and the Anti-Metaphysical Spirit," *Religion in Life*, Summer, 1959, 413-25.

"que sera, sera," resounded off the houses and rolled like fog down the frenzied streets as the "hello-glad-to meet-you-I'm-fine" Christian yawned and rolled out his carpet of etherized truth.

Glen Watts

Muslim-Christian Relations in Face of a Common Predicament

BRUCE BOSTON



Five times a day, in every mosque throughout the Islamic world, the muezzin mounts the steps inside the minaret and calls the faithful to prayer. He calls them to come to grips with life, yet most Muslims are turning a deaf ear to that call. The forces of secularization are speaking with an insistence of greater intensity and in a far louder tone than the muezzin's *hayya* (call). There is a dawning realization, as there is in the Christian world, that "religious people speak of God when human perception (often just from laziness) is at an end, or human resources fail: it is in fact the *deus ex machina* they call to their aid, either for the solving of insoluble problems or as support in human failure . . . " (Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers, April* 30, 1944). Islam is recognizing that the period of God as the *deus ex machina* is drawing to an end, for he is no longer needed to solve the problems of existence; science, politics, technology and the "free spirit of man" are quite capable of solving them alone. God must be more than a stop-gap upon whom we call to fill reality's holes. He must be more than an hypothesis to explain that which man cannot explain for himself, or solve by his own ingenuity. Like the Christian in the secular world, the Muslim in his secular world stands less and less in need of this kind of God in direct proportion to the length of time which passes into history's pages.

As the muezzin calls he is inviting man into relationship with God and with his fellows. How is the Christian of today to interpret that relationship to the Muslim in order that it be more meaningful to him than the *deus ex machina* which he is already beginning to see?

The stance of Islam outside the reconciled community places the Muslim in the middle of our road to Jericho. We have no right to pass by on the other side. Rather we must seek honest confrontation in hopes that old wounds may be bound up and relationship be restored. Perhaps the faint light shining through the common predicament may produce a glimpse of the common solution.

To say "Church" is to say "mission." But the secularization taking place in today's Islamic Near East means that the Church's approach to mission in this area of the world can no longer be predicated on theological controversy from within opposing systems. The fruit of previous labor in this vineyard has yielded only the bitter wine of self-justification, and truth on both sides has been obscured. The problem which faces the Church in its mission to a secularized Islam is essentially one of communication, and communication takes place primarily between human beings, not between systems. This in no way discounts the importance of theological considerations. They shall always be there to be dealt with. What is intended is that neither Christian nor Muslim may retreat behind

theological facades if dialogue is to occur. Both must examine the common ground which supports the theological walls that separate them.

Initially the pitfalls in the path ahead should be considered. The Muslim is not the enemy, and no interpretation of Muslim-Christian relations should ever make him so. Mission is grounded in communication and the one to whom that communication is borne is never an alien; he is always the one whom we discover on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. To hold back from a meeting with Muslims would be a rejection of our discipleship to the Lord whom we serve. Jesus' "Go and do thou likewise" was not only addressed to the lawyer! Valid mission is always interpretation, suffering and ministry.

Secondly, the road ahead is not the road of exemplary piety. If we are to learn the lessons of history we must remember that this detachment from universal norms (as it is seen through Islamic eyes) has been viewed as abandonment of a responsible living-out of the revealed will of God.

Thirdly, proselytism in its more blatant forms must be rejected as drastically unrealistic. Kenneth Cragg, an Anglican clergyman who has devoted his life's work to Christian-Muslim dialogue has said:

> This word [proselytism] has come to have ugly and unfortunate overtones. Clearly fellowship . . . would be compromised if . . . it had any end beyond itself. Colloquy . . . must be sincere, and sincere means transparent, pure, free from the ulterior. It is certainly both a Christian privilege and a Christian duty to meet with other minds on the basis of mutual respect. ("Each Other's Face," *Moslem World,* 1955, 197.)

In like manner, care must be taken that Christian response to Islam, in the form of seeking to become academically equipped to deal with it, is not misunderstood. Although missionary efforts have produced many desirable results, they have in the past been denounced by Muslims as a menace, particularly those missionary overtures which might be described as solely academic. A purely academic relationship to Islam is in some sense a frustrating enterprise. As long as it evades the demands of a human relationship, a relationship of confession, forgiveness and communication, it remains a study about Islam, not a meeting of minds with Muslims.

Similarly, Christian service in the forms of educational, medical and social ministry is in great danger of being misunderstood. The present frame of reference in the Islamic world links this with foreign aid, which in many Muslim countries has become synonymous with economic imperialism. Evangelization may become, in the eyes of him to whom it is directed, a means of capitalization on human wretchedness. "The only satisfactory answer to potential misunderstandings of Christian ministry to human need is a sound theology of mission, a deeper apprehension of the meaning of Christ's salvation among men" (Cragg, *Call of the Minaret,* New York, 1956, p. 212). We must do everything possible to dissociate Christian acts of charity from the inward urge to baptize. We need to recall Jesus' rebuke to the multitudes, "Ye seek me because ye did eat of the loaves."

But the burden of reproof must not be borne by the Christian alone, for all men stand before God, and all men seek the meaning of this world's realities. If we are to find an uncommon solution to a common problem, the Muslim must address himself to the problem as well. The usual Muslim attitude has been not to take the Christian's world view seriously at all. That is, it has not been generally recognized that Christians take their world view (formulated by the Incarnation, Death and Resurrection of Christ) as seriously as Muslims take their own. However they may seem to outsiders (and to Muslims they seem not only absurd but blasphemous), the theological affirmations which Christians make about Christ are deeply meaningful to them, and the Muslim must meet them or dialogue will go by the boards. The immediate reason for this failure is the Islamic doctrines on the same subjects (e.g. the Trinity, the Deity, Sonship and Crucifixion

of Jesus). Muslims have religious convictions for genuinely imagining that they know Christians better than Christians do themselves, for the Koran speaks to all these issues, and Islamic doctrine holds the Koran to be infallible. "In what appears to them to be 'pseudo-Christianity' of historical and personal existence, the faith by which Christians actually live, they have not been intellectually interested." (Wilfred C. Smith, *Islam in Modern History*, New York, 1959, p. 109, n. 11).

Obviously, controversy over such stumbling blocks as the Trinity and equally implausible (to the Muslim) doctrines, can be avoided by the expedient of "agreeing to disagree." But this defeats the purpose of the enterprise, which is to explore and share the essential elements of each faith. Much could be accomplished, for instance, if bickering over which revelation were true, that of Christ or that of the Koran, were set aside in favor of discussion as to the nature and meaning of revelation itself. Certainly it would be sheer folly to ignore the depths of theological difference between Christian and Muslim, but it would be equally fallacious to ignore each other.

As every coin has its obverse, so does the coin of Muslim-Christian relations. What are some of the avenues of approach which could lead to deeper, more meaningful communication in the face of secularization? In order for the Muslim to have communication with the Christian he must first take the biblical material more seriously. The study of Christianity is an internal religious obligation for the Muslim, quite apart from its necessity for communication. Secondly, it may mean that Christians may have to achieve a broader understanding of the revelatory activity of God. Islam cannot be laughed off as part of the religious "lunatic fringe."

In like manner, a deeper understanding must be achieved with respect to the affinities between the Muslim's view of the Koran as the uncreated word of God and the Johannine view of the Logos. The Koran itself refers to Jesus as the Word of God, and the time has come to seek more enlightenment as to the Muslim and Christian apprehension of revelation and the Word.

Fourthly, the nature of sin must be reexamined. Sin for the Christian is repudiation of a relationship to God, not as for the Muslim, the infraction of the law. A deepening of the problem of the nature of sin leads naturally to a deepening of understanding of forgiveness. In the Cross, the Christian affirms, God gives of himself, and is thus able to forgive. "By this, the personal relationship which man had broken becomes restored. Everything depends on whether this personal dimension is properly understood. The substitutionary doctrine of the atonement, whereby Christ makes legal satisfaction for the sin of man, has done incalculable harm to the understanding of Christ in the Muslim World." (Cragg, "The Challenge of Islam as a Living Faith," *Religion and the Christian Faith*, Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland, 12).

Another avenue of approach is a study of Islamics and a knowledge of Arabic (of paramount importance) on the part of those who would bear witness among Muslims. In the past great masses of material have been accumulated, but this has been done chiefly by Orientalists, and not by Christians with a concern for opening the way between the two faiths. Concrete efforts must be made to understand Islam from within.

It is also suggested that an increasing number of colloquia such as the one held at Bhamdun, Lebanon in 1953 be promoted between Christians and Muslims. When the cumulative effect of such conferences, and the ones sponsored each summer in Jerusalem by the Near East Christian Council under the direction of Dr. Cragg are tallied with formal study programs (e.g. the Islamic Institute of McGill University, Toronto in which both Christian and Muslim scholars participate), communication problems will begin to be solved. There is, in addition, as deep a need for Muslim Greek and

Hebraic scholars as there is for concerned Christians versed in Arabic.

If the problem posed by secularism is to be spoken to more pointedly, however, it must be emphasized that both Christian and Muslim are called upon to witness to the new dimensions which free inquiry makes possible. Secularization is opening breaches in a previously self-contained society which would formerly brook no intrusion from any quarter, particularly a Christian one. In spite of the ambivalence in Islamic society created by secularism, and in spite of still prominent pockets of resistance, secular existence is the wave of the future in Islam. And as Christianity seeks to minister to Muslim brethren in this context of new freedom from old forms, new opportunities of inquiry and examination are available.

There is a simple need for compassion and help for bewildered, oppressed and frustrated human beings in the midst of a society suddenly gone mad with change. The immediate point is only to urge that the obligation of religion to the contemporary *malaise* is inevitably an obligation to each other. Secularization has placed the Christian and the Muslim in a situation of mutual involvement. Neither habitat nor heart can escape the oneness being forced upon us all. Our circles are no longer separate, nor even tangential, but concentric and overlapping.

But the meeting of the faiths must not be construed as mere conformance to external necessity. It is rather the obligation of the natures of Christianity and Islam as interpreters of reality which must draw them together. That obligation is an obligation to each other. If the Christian acknowledges Christ as universal, he is requisite to all but pre-requisite to none. The Christian mission is simply an active recognition of the dimensions of the love of God. Christ only belongs to Christians because he belongs to *all* men; the reverse is never true. In the last analysis it is the Holy Spirit which brings men into confession, and from thence to forgiveness and communion. Christian dialogue with Islam must both begin with this realization and end with its achieving.

"A January in Port-Au-Peck"

The tar and sap of blazing drift and pine,
Steaming cups of scalding water brown,
The rise and fall of voices carried with the wind . . .
Expressions dead within a solitude and unity on ice;
Of the richest reds and bluest blues,
Are present only the rasp of two blades joined,
An outlined expanse of rutted opaque unseen,
Man fading from his conscious self, man no more.
NO. NEVER. The fringe of consciousness is always hovering.

The dull shine of a gray-white quill,
Single and silent and alone,
Grotesque in the soft frailty of knap wafting,
Half in and half out,
Trapped by molting, the chemistry of water, and wind together
Present. MAN ALWAYS.
But how can the Buddhist be?

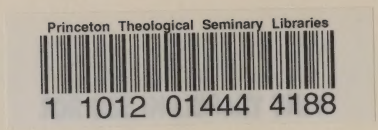
FRANK H. POOLE

DIMENSION

is a student Theological Journal Published each semester by Princeton Theologial Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey.

Manuscripts, art work, poetry and other communications should be addressed to the editor at the above address.

Although all unsolicited contributions are welcomed, the editors cannot guarantee to review or return these materials.



FOR USE IN LIBRARY ONLY

PERIODICALS

FOR USE IN LIBRARY ONLY.